

# Ten Ways your WIC Program Can Publicize New Health Insurance Opportunities

As millions of Americans become eligible for health insurance in 2014, WIC programs can play a vital role in sharing resources for learning how to get coverage and how to get help applying. Linking WIC participants to the health care they need is a fundamental WIC goal and local WIC programs are actively engaged in linking pregnant and post-partum women and young children to Medicaid. Now, other family members – including mothers who are not pregnant, fathers, older siblings, and grandparents, if they are under age 65 – may qualify for Medicaid, the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) or coverage through the new Health Insurance Marketplace. Open enrollment for the new Health Insurance Marketplace begins October 1, 2013, but as always, individuals may apply for Medicaid and CHIP at any time. The new coverage rules go into effect on January 1, 2014.

**Here's how state and local WIC Programs can contribute to the outreach effort:**

## **Spread the word**

- 1. Offer information about health insurance opportunities in WIC clinics and on WIC program websites.**

Display consumer materials from **HealthCare.gov** explaining the basics of Medicaid, CHIP and coverage through the Health Insurance Marketplace. Place them in clinic waiting rooms. Post the **HealthCare.gov** widget on the WIC program website

- 2. Invite trained speakers.**

Invite speakers from state health care agencies and health care service organizations to give reliable information on eligibility and getting help applying.

- 3. Build on the WIC intake process.**

WIC programs routinely take steps to refer pregnant and post-partum women, infants and children to Medicaid, and making those connections is more important than ever, given the new coverage opportunities. In addition, the WIC intake process provides a chance to reinforce information about the availability of new health coverage for other family members.

## **Help WIC participants apply for health coverage**

- 4. Connect WIC participants with enrollment opportunities.**

WIC clinics operating out of community health centers, local health departments and community action agencies may be able to arrange for staff of these programs to help WIC participants apply for health insurance.

- 5. Bring application assistance on site.**

Set up a time for trained helpers to provide assistance at the WIC clinic.

- 6. Help spread the word that participants can apply online.**

All states will have online health insurance applications, and people will also be able to apply by phone, by mail or in person.

**7. Link the WIC application to the online health insurance application.**

In states with online WIC applications, make it easy for applicants to access the health insurance application electronically.

## **Make health coverage enrollment easy**

**8. Work with your state Medicaid agency to learn how WIC can help simplify enrollment.**

Your state may choose to adopt Express Lane Eligibility, which is an option that uses eligibility findings from programs like WIC to streamline enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP. Speed enrollment of WIC participants in Medicaid with a data-matching arrangement between WIC and Medicaid.

## **Promote promising practices**

**9. Share successful ideas among WIC programs throughout the state.**

Collect strategies WIC programs are using to inform participants and their families about health insurance and to help them apply. Present in statewide training sessions and through other channels that reach WIC Programs in other states. Include successful approaches in state administrative manuals and consider making them standard operating procedure.

**10. Share successful ideas with WIC counterparts nationwide.**

Use conferences and regional meetings to share how your site is helping participants link to this important resource.

## **For more information about the Marketplace**

Visit **HealthCare.gov**, or call the Health Insurance Marketplace Call Center at **1-800-318-2596**. TTY users should call 1-855-889-4325.

Visit **Marketplace.cms.gov** for Marketplace widgets and badges and other partner materials.